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**In-Between Authorship In Montaigne's *Essais***

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Luke O'Sullivan has recently completed a PhD student in the Department of French at the University of Durham. His thesis examines Montaigne's use of Seneca and Plutarch, suggesting that it is in reading and working with these authors that Montaigne constructs a means of writing 'doubtfully'. He has recently published an article which studies the relationship between Montaigne's 'double et divers' thought and the literary, textual techniques with which he attempts to make the *Essais* 'double'.

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*Abstract*

Returning to Montaigne's claim of 'consubstantiality' with his book, this article examines the practice of authoring in the *Essais*. Taking as a case-study the lengthy transcription of Plutarch's 'Que signifioit ce mot E'i' which closes Montaigne's 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', I situate the essayist's intertextual practices – ambiguous borrowings; misleading or mistimed attributions – and his comments on them within the context of suspending judgement. Montaigne's suspension of judgement does not achieve static equipollence; rather, he finds himself pursuing a constant stream of weak and temporary judgements. This consideration of Montaigne's doubtful thinking affords a new perspective on the plurivocality of the *Essais*, illuminating the essayist's claims both to take ownership of his sources and, on the other hand, to experience a sense of having lost his authorial role when he returns to passages written long ago. The *Essais* present their reader with passages which seem to have two authors at once but, rather than functioning as moments of assimilation, digestion, or plagiarism, Montaigne's 'in-between authorship' effects the weak and temporary resolution of these doubles: we see now one author, now another. With 'in-between authorship', Montaigne creates a text which does not simply accommodate an increasingly broad network of authorial agencies; it stages and encourages reading as an on-going practice of forming weak, uncertain, and inconstant judgements. Montaigne's doubtful authorship, relying on unstable doubles, constitutes a way of thinking with writing; blurring the lines between what is his and not-his, he makes the *Essais* an extension not of his 'self' but of his thinking.

*Key words:* Michel de Montaigne; authorship; doubt; multiplicity; ambiguity;

cognition; inconstancy

'Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre,' wrote Montaigne, 'que mon livre m'a faict, livre consubstantiel à son autheur.'[1] This relationship between Montaigne and his book has always held a central position in our understanding of the *Essais*. Montaigne cites, translates, alludes

[1] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey and V.-L. Saulnier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965 [2004]), II.18.665. All further references to the *Essais* will be incorporated into the text, giving book, chapter, and page and, where relevant, the [A], [B], and [C] markers of compositional strata.

to, and silently borrows from classical authors relentlessly though, at least since Villey's studies at the beginning of the last century, this has been taken as a practice of textual assimilation: of rejecting the authority of *auctores* and making borrowed words his own.[2] Montaigne's book may be built entirely from the 'despouilles' of Seneca and Plutarch, but it is still his book (II.32.721). Throughout the *Essais*, however, Montaigne's place as the 'author' of his text is challenged by both the essayist's textual practices and his reflections on them: passages written long ago seem no longer to be his, he says; words of French prose are appended by a Latin tag which prompts the reader to recognise that the French is, in fact, a translation.[3] In 'Sur des vers de Virgile', he seems to contradict himself from one line to the next: 'tout le monde me reconnoit en mon livre, et mon livre en moy. Or j'ay une condition singeresse et imitatrice' (III.5.875). Here, the book is a true representation of Montaigne but Montaigne tends to look like someone else.

How, then, are we to understand Montaigne as the 'consubstantiel […] autheur' of his text? Taking a central instance of Montaigne's ambiguous authorship as a case-study, I suggest that the *Essais* call for an understanding of authoring which works by twos, relying on ambiguity and instability as it produces a text in which multiple authors seem to occupy the same space at the same time and in which the reader sees now one, now another. This form of authoring 'in-between', between multiple authors (including himself) and in the 'in-

[2] Pierre Villey, *Les Sources et évolution des Essais* (Paris: Hachette, 1908). Foundational works in this area are Antoine Compagnon's *La Seconde Main ou le travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979) and Floyd Gray's *Montaigne bilingue: le latin des Essais* (Paris: Champion, 1991). For a more recent approach, see Peter Mack, *Reading and Rhetoric in Montaigne and Shakespeare* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010) and Richard Scholar, 'J'aime Michel, mais j'aime mieux la vérité': Creative Reading and Free-Thinking in Montaigne,' *Nottingham French Studies*, 49 3 (2010), pp. 39-51.

[3] See, for instance, the post-1588 passage at III.9.997: Montaigne silently translates Cicero's *De finibus* before shifting to a transcription of the Latin.

between' space of the text, affords Montaigne a new way of writing doubtfully, of constructing a 'forme d'escrire douteuse et irresolue' (II.12.509).[4]

**'Et le jugeant et le jugé estans en continuelle mutation et branle': Authors on the Move**

The 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', the long, central chapter on the impossibility of human knowledge, closes, perhaps surprisingly given its doubtful and Sceptical vantage point, with something resembling a conclusion:

> Finalement, il n'y a aucune constante existence, ny de nostre estre, ny de celuy des objects. Et nous, et nostre jugement, et toutes choses mortelles vont coulant et roulant sans cesse. Ainsin il ne se peut establir rien de certain de l'un à l'autre, et le jugeant et le jugé estans en continuelle mutation et branle. (II.12.601).

Everything, he asserts, is in a constant state of flux. This movement is not limited to the physical world but is extended also to our faculties of judgement: it is not simply that we cannot judge because what we observe is unstable; we too are unfixed and changing.

Without acknowledgement, the following four folio pages in the 1588 edition consist of an extended transcription of the closing sections of Plutarch's 'Que signifioit ce mot E'i' as translated by Jacques Amyot.[5] The transcription is precise though Montaigne does make some changes: additions, elisions, suppressions, and substitutions. André Tournon has studied the effect of Montaigne's punctuation in this passage: where Amyot renders Plutarch's developing, logical argument in long phrases, punctuated gently and unobtrusively with 'virgules, qui jalonnent les corpures syntaxiques', Montaigne employs 'ponctuations fortes' –

[4] In the 'Exemplaire de Bordeaux', Montaigne rewrote this passage, describing the writing styles of Seneca and Plutarch, to read: 'une forme d'escrire douteuse en substance, et un dessein enquerant', fol. 213r.
[5] Approximately two pages in the Villey-Saulnier edition.

full-stops and majuscules – to segment the text and to rupture its easy flow.[6] There are a number of word substitutions – 'communication' for 'participation' (II.12.601, 'Que signifioit ce mot E'i', fol. 356v.), 'De façon' for 'De manière' (II.12.602, fol. 357r.), 'especе' for 'sorte' (ibid., ibid.) – as well as instances where Montaigne curtails Amyot's periphrastic tendencies, replacing, for example, Amyot's 'la mesme forme & figure de visage, ny le mesme sentiment' with 'le mesme sentiment' (fol. 357r., II.12.603). Some suppressions, however, are more significant: in the list of rhetorical questions regarding personal inconstancy, Montaigne chooses to leave out a question which would seem to have significant implications for the practice of transcription he is currently engaged in as well as for the issues regarding translation which underpin his use of Amyot-Plutarch: 'comment usons nous d'autres & different langages?' (fol. 357r.). One would think that this question of changing languages would be seized upon and its absence is conspicuous.

There are also additions: four lines from Lucretius but also a development of Plutarch's reference to Heraclitus and his statement on the impossibility of stepping into the same river twice. Here, Montaigne expands the doxography to include Plato (who speaks the words of Socrates), Homer (whose words are spoken first by Socrates and then Plato), Parmenides, Pythagoras, the Stoics, Epicharmus, 'tous les Philosophes' (II.12.601-602). Montaigne seems to be pulling away from Plutarch, reworking his text and introducing a cacophony of disagreeing voices, amplifying and augmenting the chorus, incorporating – particularly in the case of Homer, Socrates, and Plato – ambiguous voices that seem to bleed into one another. But these voices are taken from other opuscules by Plutarch.[7] Montaigne departs from Plutarch's text by turning to (different parts of) Plutarch's text.

[6] André Tournon, 'Les Palimpsestes du "langage coupé"', *La Langue de Rabelais – la langue de Montaigne*, ed. by Franco Giacone (Geneva: Droz, 2009), pp. 351-369 (pp. 355-356).
[7] J.-Y. Pouilloux, 'Montaigne et Plutarque I: sur le *Ei* de Delphes', *Montaigne: une vérité singulière* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), pp. 245-262 (pp. 253-255); Isabelle Konstantinovic, *Montaigne et Plutarque*

These changes compound the issues raised by the act of extended transcription: how are we to respond to the opposed practices of faithful copying and free-roaming divergence? How do these changes impact on our understanding of the 'authorship' of this passage? And if, as I suggest, Montaigne expected most of his readers not to easily, readily identify the provenance of this passage from the outset, how are we to gauge the (intended) reception not only of the act of transcription but also of the changes made to the source-text?

It is only after having transcribed this extended passage that it is made apparent that what preceded was, in some way, 'emprunté': '[A] A cette conclusion si religieuse d'un homme payen je veux joindre seulement ce mot d'un tesmoing de mesme condition' (II.12.603). What follows is a translated quotation from Seneca and while this is also anonymous, as is often the case in Montaigne's Senecan borrowings, we recognise it to be 'emprunté' from the outset. The Plutarchan loan, however, is much less clearly delineated and it is by no means apparent that an early modern reader, perhaps more familiar with the Plutarchan text, would immediately or confidently recognise this source. Upon reaching this point in the chapter, it becomes clear that an undefined portion of what we have just read was, in some way, not written by Montaigne. Montaigne's reference to 'cette conclusion' prompts us to look back over what we have read. The preceding sentence – the last sentence of the 'emprunt' – begins: 'Parquoy *il faut conclurre* que Dieu seul est, non poinct selon aucune mesure du temps, mais selon une eternité immuable et immobile, non mesurée par temps, ny subjecte à aucune declinaison' (my emphasis). This lexical echo highlights this sentence, differentiating it from what came before: it seems that Montaigne is leading his reader to assume that this, and only this, is the 'conclusion si religieuse'.

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(Geneva: Droz, 1989), p. 370. Pouilloux's study frames this extract with Montaigne's comment that 'les paroles redictes ont, comme autre son, autre sens' (III.12.1063). He argues that Montaigne 'ne s'autorise à conclure un discours sur Dieu' (p. 261).

This extract has, on occasion, been highlighted as an exemplar of Montaignean plagiarism.[8] Few scholars have seen this as an example of Montaigne's 'emprunts' which are 'si fameux et anciens qu'ils […] se nomm[ent] assez' (II.10.408): in a study from 1906, Joseph de Zangroniz made the case (which does not seem to have been defended in recent years) that 'les auteurs qu'il citait étaient tous de noms fameux et anciens, puisque tout le monde connaissait alors le Plutarque d'Amyot.'[9] Most frequently, it is seen as evidence of Montaigne's process of assimilating, digesting, or asserting ownership of his reading.[10]

More recently, Warren Boutcher has focused attention on an alternative early modern model of authorship; one which moves away from ingestion, digestion, and reception towards a model of patrons, patterns, and models. Boutcher examines the 'patron-author' directing the hands of others in the construction of an art-object (in this case, a book, the *Essais*) which is at once a self-portrait, a 'public witness to the author's private moral character', and a technology by which the patron-author's agency might extend across time and space through letters.[11] For Boutcher, the early modern book is the site of a network of agencies, a network of different actors participating in diverse ways. Boutcher's focus lies predominantly with Montaigne's readers rather than his reading though we might productively ask how the *Essais* exhibit this plurality of actors and agents. The idea of Montaigne as a 'patron-author', as both

[8] See, for example, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Montaigne: l'écriture de l'essai* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), p. 75, Bernard Sève, *Montaigne: des règles pour l'esprit* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), p. 269, and Marilyn Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 114-5, 128. On 'plagiarism' in an early modern context, see *Emprunt, plagiat, réécriture aux XVe, XVIe, XVIIe siècles*, ed. by M. Couton et al. (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2006) and *Borrowed Feathers: Plagiarism and the Limits of Imitation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Hall Bjornstad (Oslo: Unipub, 2008).

[9] *Montaigne, Amyot, Saliat: étude sur les sources des Essais de Montaigne* (Paris: Champion, 1906), p. viii.

[10] A particularly clear instance can be found in Floyd Gray's influential study, *Montaigne bilingue: le Latin des Essais*.

[11] *The School of Montaigne in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2 vols. (vol. 1, p. 21, p. 51). Boutcher briefly considers this transcription from Plutarch at the end of the 'Apologie', describing as a 'paradox' the way Montaigne 'draw[s] on authoritative ancient models [Plutarch] to authorise his not doing so', vol. 1, p. 154.

a ‘pattern’ or model expressed by the text and as a free-thinking agent directing the work (and the work of others), might illuminate Montaigne’s claim, ‘je fay dire aux autres ce que je ne puis si bien dire’, for example (II.10.408).[12]

As the end of the ‘Apologie’ begins to make clear, however, Montaigne at once embraces this potential for the text to exhibit a plurality of agencies while positioning himself and his reader such that both find themselves struggling to determine which agent is directing meaning, who says what, and on behalf of whom. With a misleading attribution which comes too late, Montaigne leaves his reader trying to work out whether the essayist is bending himself to Plutarch’s pattern or Plutarch to his.

Attending to the content of this transcribed passage reveals Montaigne engaging with this tension, thinking through the problem of how to understand a text which seems to have two overlapping and perhaps competing authors, two ‘patrons’ in Boutcher’s terminology. The passage begins by noting that ‘Nous n’avons aucune communication[13] à l’estre’ before suggesting that ‘si, de fortune, vous fichez vostre pensée à vouloir prendre son estre, ce sera ne plus ne moins que qui voudroit empoigner l’eau: car tant plus il serrera et pressera ce qui de sa nature coule par tout, tant plus il perdra ce qu’il vouloit tenir et empoigner’ (II.12.601). This water metaphor leads to Heraclitus’s teaching, ‘que jamais homme n’estoit deux fois entré en mesme riviere’ (II.12.602). This Heraclitean philosophy of movement and flux – both in the world and within the individual – is developed at length, taking examples and metaphors from nature, before focusing more specifically on the changing nature of the

[12] For a particularly clear explanation of the ‘patron-author’ directing the work (of reading and of writing) done by others, see Boutcher’s account of Lady Anne Clifford, *The School of Montaigne,* vol. 1, pp. 26-30.

[13] Amyot has ‘participation’, *Les Œuvres morales et meslees de Plutarque* (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1572), fol. 356v. Where minor, one word differences occur, I follow Montaigne’s text.

individual.[14] These lines from Plutarch look as though they could be the *Essais* in microcosm: stressing the need to see the folly in fearing death and to 'apprendre à mourir', they go on to foreshadow Montaigne's claim, 'Je ne peints pas l'estre[,] Je peints le passage' (III.2.805), highlighting the ungraspable change not only of the external world but also of the personal. And yet they are not, at least according to an everyday, commonplace understanding, authored by Montaigne.

The Plutarchan passage turns then to its final question: 'Mais qu'est-ce donc qui est veritablement?' The answer is God, the eternal, 'c'est à dire qui n'a jamais eu de naissance, ny n'aura jamais fin; à qui le temps n'apporte jamais aucune mutation' (II.12.603). The gulf between, on the one hand, the eternal and, on the other, impotent, temporally fixed human language is drawn out, returning to the theme of mankind's inability to achieve knowledge through reason highlighted earlier in this Plutarchan passage and throughout the 'Apologie':

> […] à qui appartiennent ces mots: devant et apres, et a esté ou sera, lesquels tout de prime face montrent evidemment que ce n'est pas chose qui soit: car ce seroit grande sottise et fauceté toute apparente de dire que cela soit qui n'est pas encore en estre, ou qui desjà a cessé d'estre. Et quand à ces mots: present, instant, maintenant, par lesquels il semble que principalement nous soustenons et fondons l'intelligence du temps, la raison le descouvrant le destruit tout sur le champ: car elle le fend incontinent et le part en futur et en passé, comme le voulant voir necessairement desparty en deux. […] [C]e seroit peché de dire de Dieu, qui est le seul qui est, qu'il fut ou il sera. Ces termes là sont declinaisons, passages ou vicissitudes de ce qui ne peut durer ny demeurer en estre. (II.12.603).

Language attempts to temporally fix not only the unknowable eternity of God but also the fluctuating, constantly moving nature of all things. Words give us the illusion of stasis,

[14] A significant body of scholarship has been dedicated to Montaigne's relationship to ideas — and particularly Heraclitean ideas — of movement. See, principally, Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne en mouvement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), Patrick Henry, 'Montaigne and Heraclitus: Pattern and Flux, Continuity and Change in "Du repentir"', *Montaigne Studies*, 4 (1992), pp. 7-18, Michel Jeanneret, 'Montaigne et l'œuvre mobile', *Carrefour Montaigne*, ed. by Fausta Garavini (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1994), pp. 37-62 and, by the same author, *Perpetuum mobile: métamorphoses des corps et des œuvres de Vinci à Montaigne* (Paris: Macula, 1997).

leading us into the 'grande sottise et fauceté' of thinking that we might be able to get a grip on something, some aspect of 'l'estre'. As Montaigne makes plain at the beginning of 'De la gloire', '[A] Il y a le nom et la chose: le nom, c'est une voix qui remerque et signifie la chose; le nom, ce n'est pas une partie de la chose ny de la substance, c'est une piece estrangere joincte à la chose, et hors d'elle' (II.16.618). Language can speak of 'estre', 'maintenant', and things in the world though it will never have any 'communication' with these things. Our folly in thinking that language might be stable enough to speak of God or to give stability to the world is gestured towards throughout Montaigne's source text: Plutarch's treatise is primarily not about the slippery nature of 'things' but of one, polysemous, polyvalent word.

This linguistic issue is further highlighted by Amyot's translation. He uses the term 'declinaisons' twice in quick succession to translate two different words: the final line of the passage quoted above finds its echo in the following sentence where he notes that God's eternity is 'immuable & immobile, non mesuree par temps, ny subjecte à aucune declinaison' (fol. 357v.). In Greek, we read: '*ταῦτα γὰρ ἐγκλίσεις* τινές εἰσι καὶ μεταβάσεις καὶ παραλλάξεις τοῦ μένειν ἐν τῷ εἶναι μὴ πεφυκότος'; 'ἀκίνητον καὶ ἄχρονον καὶ *ἀνέγκλιτον*' (my emphasis).[15] In the first instance, a more literal translation might be 'for these things are inclinations or deviations'; in the latter, '[the eternity of God is] unmoved and timeless and unchanging'. In translating these as 'declinaisons', Amyot retains the sense of deviation, as evidenced by the triplet which includes 'passages & vicissitudes', while affording a further link to this problem of language, particularly as he places a stress on 'ces termes' rather than the ontological states to which they refer (Plutarch's text reads 'ταῦτα γὰρ', 'for these'). In the original Greek, it seems that Plutarch is thinking about movement and change with regard to physics, temporality, and ontology ('we cannot say that what is "was" or "will be" because "was" and "will be" describe *states* of change and movement') while Amyot shifts the

[15] Plutarch, *Moralia*, ed. and trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), vol. V. p. 244.

emphasis or rather broadens its implications, pushing us to think about language as temporal and perspectival: these words ('ces termes là') are part of a grammar which takes person, number, and tense as its foundation; they are taken from a linguistic apparatus which is built on principles entirely opposed to those of the eternal, unchanging state of divine being. Amyot's translation, then, blurs the problems of ontology with the problems of language.

Further, as Wes Williams has shown, the opening line of this 'emprunt' – 'Nous n'avons aucune communication à l'estre, par ce que toute humaine nature est tousjours au milieu entre le naistre et le mourir' – 'turns around a further, peculiar, resonant coupling – "estre/naistre" (being/being born) – the better to argue their relational non-identity.'[16] This couple is returned to a few lines later: 'ce qui commence à naistre ne parvient jamais à perfection d'estre, pourautant que ce naistre n'acheve jamais' (II.12.602). As Williams argues, 'estre' and 'naistre' 'sound the same in French, but for the "n"; but it's the extra "n" that makes the negative, but never quite conclusive, difference in our nature': 'estre' requires 'naistre' and yet the slippage of language reveals more than it seems to, showing us, rather than telling, that 'naistre' is 'n'estre (pas).'[17] Like everything in this fluctuating world, language may appear stable, but if we look carefully it quickly becomes apparent that we have taken 'ce qui apparoit pour ce qui est' (II.12.603).

Where is Montaigne's place amid all of this uncertainty and movement? It seems that we read this passage assuming it to have been written by Montaigne and, at the end, are surprised to find that some of what we have read was not.[18] Montaigne's transcription could be taken as a practice of digestion, or as an expression of free-thinking, disregarding the role

[16] Wes Williams, 'Being in the Middle: Translation, Transition and the Early Modern,' *Paragraph* 29 (2006), pp. 27-39 (p. 36).
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ann Hartle has said that this 'creates a jarring break in the conversational flow of his writing' though Hartle leaves aside the question of whose writing might be described as being 'conversational'. *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 75.

of the ancient authority, or as the activity of the patron, directing the labour of others working in his or her service as an extension of the patron's agency: it could be recognised as any of these were it not for the troubling, misleading attribution which comes right at the end, dramatically reframing what comes before. Are we tricked into thinking that this was written by Montaigne when Plutarch (or perhaps Amyot) was the 'real' author? Or has Montaigne, in selecting this text, integrating it so subtly into his own work, become the author himself? Perhaps it is both of these and, at the same time, neither of these: to quote Rabelais' Trouillogan, his parody of the Sceptical philosopher who speaks in contradictions, we can say that the 'real' author is 'ne l'un ne l'aultre, et tous les deux ensemble.'[19] In an extract on the constantly changing nature of all things, in which language at once corrupts God's being and misleads us into thinking that we 'are', taken from a text on the plurality of meanings contained simultaneously in one word and inserted into a text on the impotence of human reason, these words written by Plutarch, rewritten by Amyot, rewritten by Montaigne must also be inconstant, in flux. Just as Heraclitus said that 'jamais homme n'estoit deux fois entré en mesme riviere' (II.12.602), this passage suggests that words, no matter how exactly they are echoed, can never truly be repeated: the inconstancy of things and words and the flow of time leaves them somehow changed; their meaning, along with their attribution and ownership, seems always to escape our grasp. In attempting to determine the authorship of this passage, we find ourselves in the same position as the individual 'qui voudroit empoigner l'eau' (II.12.601).

**'Le cul entre deux selles': Inconstant Authorship**

[19] François Rabelais, *Tiers Livre* in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 465.

‘[J]e fusse en continuelle frayeur et frenesie,’ writes Montaigne. ‘A chaque minute il me semble que je m’eschape’ (I.20.88). Montaigne, his opinions and perspectives, and his relationship to himself: these figures are all constantly on the move. ‘Je m’eschape tous les jours,’ he notes, ‘et me desrobe à moy’ (II.17.642). As Michel Jeanneret notes, ‘Perçue comme une masse amorphe et fluctuante dans laquelle s’assemblent puis se désassemblent des constellations d’humeurs passagères, la vie intérieure ressemble au chaos originel. Si la personne est cette épave flottante, il n’est pas étonnant que la pensée qu’elle produit soit elle aussi inconstante.’[20]

The printed page resists this inconstancy. This is not to say that the early modern book was seen to be definitive or final; the printing history of the *Essais* and the ways in which the printed volume was used by Montaigne and his readers show this clearly enough. Rather, my point is that language, and especially written language (which lacks the temporality afforded to spoken language), is a medium too fixed and rigid to reflect or accommodate the plural, polyvalent, and constantly shifting world of thought.[21] We can look again from this perspective at Montaigne’s explanation for writing in French rather than Latin: ‘J’escris mon livre à peu d’hommes et à peu d’années. Si ç’eust esté une matiere de durée, il l’eust fallu commettre à un langage plus ferme’ (III.9.983). Unlike Latin, French lacks a certain fixity and firmness: it is transient; flaccid, perhaps; it has a propensity for change and manipulation which might accommodate or at least echo Montaigne’s own inconstancy.[22]

[20] Jeanneret, *Perpetuum mobile,* pp. 108-9.
[21] ‘[A] Mes ouvrages, il s’en faut tant qu’ils me rient, qu’autant de fois que je les retaste, autant de fois je m’en despite […]. J’ay tousjours une idée en l’ame [C] et certaine image trouble, [A] qui mes presente [C] comme en songe [A] une meilleure forme que celle que j’ay mis en besongne, mais je ne la puis saisir’, II.17.636-637.
[22] See Montaigne on manipulating and stretching language, a point which reinforces this emphasis on linguistic pliability and lack of firmness: ‘Le maniement et emploite des beaux espris donne pris à la langue, non pas l’innovant tant comme la remplissant de plus vigoreux et divers services, et l’estirant et ployant’, III.5.873.

Words printed on a page can describe, gesture towards, or represent mimetically the twists and turns of thought though the polyvalency and simultaneity of thinking is flattened and abbreviated in the process. Terence Cave has studied how language relies on 'underspecification' to communicate thoughts which cannot be expressed fully and explicitly: 'underspecification is not a local phenomenon […]. It is literally not possible to "spell everything out" in words.'[23] Written language cannot express the full and rich diversity of thought and this is not because of limitations of time and space, 'd'ancre et de papier' (III.9.945), but is rather a fundamental, foundational limitation.

'J'adjouste,' Montaigne said, 'je ne corrige pas' (III.9.963) but even this process of layering and addition struggles to achieve the multiplicity and synchronism required to express thought as it is experienced: 'nostre entendement,' he writes, 'est double et divers, et les matieres doubles et diverses' (III.11.1034); 'nous sommes, je ne sçay comment, doubles en nous mesmes, qui faict que ce que nous croyons, nous ne le croyons pas' (II.16.619). In 'De l'experience', he asks: 'Qu'ont gaigné nos legislateurs à choisir cent mille especes et faicts particuliers, et y attacher cent mille loix? Ce nombre n'a aucune proportion avec l'infinie diversité des actions humaines. La multiplication de nos inventions n'arrivera pas à la variation des exemples' (III.13.1066). Juridical language, the standard of affirmative and resolved language against which Montaigne often attempts to define his own discourse, is shown here to be capable only of gathering a sequential list of particulars, with the 'variation' and 'infinie diversité' of experience always out of reach. Furthermore, as Cave notes, Montaigne's metaphor of self-portraiture, 'static rather than dynamic, […] fails to render the temporal continuity and flux that is essential to his perception of himself and the world.'[24] The greatest of these problems is that language 'est tout formé de propositions affirmatives'

[23] Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 33.
[24] Terence Cave, *How to Read Montaigne* (London: Granta, 2007), p. 86.

(II.12.527). Our moving conceptions of a moving world are rendered static, definitive, and assertive by language: 'toutes fois nous voylà embourbez' (II.12.527).

Montaigne challenges his own status as author: the example above from the end of the 'Apologie' is a key though by no means isolated example. He questions the place of 'authority' in the text, pushing the reader to ask where the text comes from and to what extent the text is made up of 'authorised' assertions. In doing so, Montaigne tries to get around these linguistic limitations; he attempts to find a way of speaking tentatively of provisional opinions and perspectives within writing. As we have long recognised, Montaigne can and indeed does assimilate and rewrite the words of others, making them his own: '[A] Je feuillette les livres, je ne les estudie pas: ce qui m'en demeure, c'est chose que je ne reconnois plus estre d'autruy; c'est cela seulement dequoy mon jugement a faict son profict, les discours et les imaginations dequoy il s'est imbu; l'autheur, le lieu, les mots et autres circonstances, je les oublie incontinent' (II.17.651). Reading in snatches, Montaigne seizes the 'discours' and the 'imaginations' he encounters: the provenance and the particular articulation ('les mots et autres circonstances') of these textual snippets fall by the wayside as they are processed and acquired by his profiteering 'jugement'. That which remains in him is that which can no longer be said to belong to any other.

This quotation from 'De la praesumption' is, however, followed immediately by countering [B] and [C] text interpolations:

> [B] Et suis si excellent en l'oubliance que mes escrits mesmes et compositions, je ne les oublie pas moins que le reste. On m'allegue tous les coups à moy-mesme sans que je le sente. Qui voudroit sçavoir d'où sont les vers et exemples que j'ay icy entassez, me mettroit en peine de le luy dire […] [C] Ce n'est pas grand merveille si mon livre suit la fortune des autres livres et si ma memoire desempare ce que j'escry comme ce que je ly, et ce que je donne comme ce que je reçoy.

Here, Montaigne equates his relationship with his own writing with his relationship with all other texts: he reads – and forgets – his compositions as a reader rather than as their author; he places his words in the mouths of others ('on m'allegue') and claims that he does not recognise these words, spoken by someone else, to be his. He claims to be 'consubstantiel' with his book though, in that context, the book is emblematic of the enterprise as a whole; of using language to do and explore complex thought and of coming to 'know himself' through this activity. Here, however, it is the content of what he writes, the things professed and the particularities not of his writing but of the things he has written which are under discussion. These are not described as sharing his 'substance' but are instead placed within a framework of property and possession: these are things which can be stock-piled ('j'ay icy entassez'). This ownership, however, is far from secure. The point here is that just as Montaigne is capable of incorporating and assimilating the words of others so too is he capable of 'losing' authorial ownership of his own text.

That this understanding of authorship as something which can be lost as well as gained finds expression not in the [A] text but in the additions and 'allongeails' might reveal something of Montaigne's relationship to his book not only as the 'consubstantiel' extension of his thinking but also as an object which is bought and sold, read and discussed: the generalised or hypothetical encounters Montaigne describes are encounters with readers. It is in such a context that his book becomes equated with others, capable of being quoted, spoken by, and, in that sense, 'owned' by someone else, but also capable of slipping out of Montaigne's own grip, being forgotten or misremembered, and ceasing to be counted as his property.

As Warren Boutcher has recently shown, the *Essais* are sited within a network of social and commercial interactions in which the book acquires meaning and extends agency as it moves through different social interactions and participates in diverse interpersonal

relationships.[25] So, for instance, Pieter van Veen, the Dutch lawyer and student of Lipsius, 'is not "receiving" the *Essais*' when he prepares a copy of the printed text for his son with pen-and-ink drawings in the margins; '[he] is abducting the agency', '[he] makes a unique work of art of his own that has similar functions to the original work by Montaigne. He is interacting with his son and his wider posterity in the process, showing his imagination and judgement at work'.[26] With Boutcher's case-study, we see a clear instance of a text on the move, acquiring new contexts and, in the process, new meanings, working for and witnessing new 'patron-authors'. Montaigne's in-between authorship, however, reveals something different. First, it presents its reader with textual moments which seem to have two authors in the same moment and in the same function. Montaigne's surprising attribution at the end of the 'Apologie' reveals Plutarch occupying the space and role we thought was occupied by Montaigne; in leaving this attribution to the end, Montaigne waits for his reader to have independently attributed the passage to the essayist: rather than presenting different 'patron-authors' in different contexts, Montaigne's textual practices push the reader to consider two authors at once. Secondly, Montaigne's reflections on his writing practices show that Montaigne-the-author, capable of acquiring other people's words, can lose authorship of his own. In the *Essais*, Montaigne can 'author' words he didn't write (a capacity consonant both with the digestive and the 'patron-author' model examined by Boutcher) but he can also *not* be the author of words he did write. The ambiguity engrained in Montaigne's authorship lies not simply in its tendency towards plurality: if this were the case, Plutarch's words would come under Montaigne's 'patronage'. What makes Montaigne's authoring doubtful is that, within this context of plural, overlapping authors, the authorial persona can be lost and can be felt to have been lost.

[25] *The School of Montaigne*, vol. 1, pp. xvi-xvii.
[26] Ibid. p. 65. On the van Veens, see vol. 1, pp. 63-67, vol. 2, 291-322.

And it is not simply that Montaigne's authorial persona can be lost; Montaigne deprives his source authors of their textual property: '[C] Je veux qu'ils donnent une nazarde à Plutarque sur mon nez et qu'ils s'eschaudent à injurier Seneque en moy' (II.10.408); '[A] ce qui m'en demeure, c'est chose que je ne reconnois plus estre d'autruy', (II.17.651); '[B] Je desrobe mes larrecins et les desguise. […] Comme ceux qui desrobent les chevaux, je leur peins le crin et la queuë, et par fois je les esborgne' (III.12.1056).[27] The closing section of the 'Apologie' shows this in action: his textual practices push his reader to misattribute the words that are read, ascribing them (and, by extension, their ownership) to the 'wrong' author. Text from other authors moves in to his sphere of authorial ownership (or patronage), but, in precisely the same way, his own text – which includes those intertexts which have become 'his' – manages to slip away from his authorial signature.

Speaking of what he takes from Seneca and Plutarch, Montaigne writes: 'J'en attache quelque chose à ce papier; à moy si peu que rien' (I.26.146). This is both *sprezzatura* – it forms part of his opening address to Diane de Foix at the head of 'De l'institution des enfants' in which he professes his inability to address the topic he will subsequently write expansively upon – and a performance of 'la teste bien faicte', not 'bien pleine', of his ideal pedagogue (I.26.150). It nevertheless highlights a way of thinking about text, intertextual incorporation, and textual or intellectual 'ownership' which privileges the space of the page rather than the author as the locus and vessel of thought.[28] The act of thinking is sited in this interaction between Montaigne, his book, and those of authors like Seneca and Plutarch; it is sited in the act of writing and reading. With authorship made ambiguous and prone to being doubled, this textual thinking is capable of maintaining two authorial voices, two

[27] The last quotation is crossed out – 'de-authorised' – on the 'Exemplaire de Bordeaux'. On early modern textual 'property', see Kathy Eden, 'Literary Property and the Question of Style: A Prehistory', *Borrowed Feathers*, pp. 21-38.

[28] Adopting Boutcher's perspective, we might see Diane de Foix as the patron/'patron-author' directing, even 'authorising' Montaigne's work. Montaigne's focus is nevertheless the 'papier', the space between these two authorial figures.

perspectives, in one superficially singular text, passage, or phrase. Montaigne's relationship with texts – 'empruntés' or not – might, then, be better thought of as one of association rather than assimilation.

In presenting the reader with moments of authorial doubleness while commenting on the diverse means by which the authorial persona (his or otherwise) can be lost, Montaigne gives authorship a productive and unresolved tension. The practices of authoring and of thinking both become temporally present activities and, significantly, activities which are done in and with writing. It is with this in mind that we might return to the role of Montaigne's book in the (pre-)history of the self.[29] Rather than presenting a record of Montaigne's private thoughts or as a 'witness to the author's private moral character as a freeman',[30] we might see the *Essais* as 'consubstantiel' with Montaigne in as much as they constitute the tool and arena with and in which he does his particularly textual mode of thinking; not a portrait of their author but a public practice of the on-going, uncertain, give-and-take activity of authoring.

**Thinking Through the Text**

Montaigne's particular form of suspending judgement provides a framework for this unstable, ambiguous authorship. Preferring *astheneia* ('absence of strength') to the term listed among the *phonai skeptikai*, *isostheneia* ('equal strength', 'equipollence'), Frédéric Brahami has shown that Montaigne's Sceptical thought does not lead to *epoché*, an absolute suspension of judgement but rather to weak and temporary judgements: 'Il n'y a plus, chez Montaigne,

[29] See Terence Cave's study of the emergence of a substantive 'moi' in the late sixteenth century, 'Fragments d'un moi futur: de Pascal à Montaigne', *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), pp. 111-127.
[30] Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne*, vol. 1, p. 21.

d'isosthénie, parce qu'il conçoit l'âme comme un flux.'[31] 'Or, s'il n'y a pas d'isosthénie,' he argues, 'il ne peut y avoir d'*épokè*, car l'âme ne peut plus rester en équilibre à égale distance de ses représentations. […] Elle [*isostheneia*] présuppose un arrêt, arrêt des représentations, mais aussi arrêt de l'esprit sur ces représentations.'[32] This is particularly clear in 'De la praesumption':

> Et la plus penible assiete pour moy, c'est estre suspens és choses qui pressent et agité entre la crainte et l'esperance. Le deliberer, voire és choses plus legieres, m'importune; et sens mon esprit plus empesché à souffrir le branle et les secousses diverses du doute et de la consultation, qu'à se rassoir et resoudre à quelque party que ce soit, apres que la chance est livrée. Peu de passions m'ont troublé le sommeil; mais, des deliberations, la moindre me le trouble. (II.17.644).

This may look like Montaigne at his least Sceptical: *epoché* (the suspension of judgement), the essence of Sextusian Scepticism, is here cast aside in favour of the much easier practice of adopting positions and opinions readily, seemingly without examination, determined by chance.[33] Seen in the light of Brahami's argument, it becomes clear that this endless sequence of weak, temporary judgements is a mode of Scepticism which accepts, without trying to sublimate into *ataraxia* ('tranquillity'), the *fluctuatio animi* inherent in Montaigne's perception of the world. As Montaigne says in 'De l'inconstance de nos actions', 'Nous flottons entre divers advis: nous ne voulons rien librement, rien absoluëment, rien constamment' (II.1.333). Rather than functioning as a symbol of constant, static equipollence,

[31] Frédéric Brahami, *Le Scepticisme de Montaigne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), p. 68.
[32] Ibid. pp. 68-69.
[33] Ann Hartle notes that 'Montaigne's skepticism is evident in his attitude toward the inability of art to overcome or improve upon chance', *Accidental Philosopher*, p. 220. See also Olivier Guerrier, *Rencontre et reconnaissance: les Essais ou le jeu du hasard et de la vérité* (Paris: Garnier, 2016).

Montaigne's 'balance', imprinted on his 1576 'jeton', shows now one reading, now another, tilting back and forth endlessly though without ever resting definitively this way or that.[34]

In the previous section, I traced a mode in which authorship can be both doubled up and lost; in which authoring becomes an on-going practice taking place between Montaigne and his authors, on the page. This mode of authoring, which prompts the reader to ask constantly what is Montaigne's and what is 'emprunté', works to create a discourse capable of reflecting these weak and temporary judgements. 'Si je parle diversement de moy,' notes Montaigne, 'c'est que je me regarde diversement' (II.1.335). 'Car en ce que je dy,' he writes elsewhere, 'je ne pleuvis autre certitude, sinon que c'est ce que lors j'en avoy en ma pensée, pensée tumultuaire et vacillante' (III.9.1033). The guarantee ensures only that such a view *was* held, highlighting again the transient, moving nature of thought which Montaigne seeks to capture on the page. If Montaigne is to find a means of extending these temporary judgements onto the page, he must do something other than simply record them, piling up instance and example, layer and gloss.

The deliberate and sustained ambiguity of authorship, seen in the conclusion to the 'Apologie' but evident at key junctures throughout the text, gives the text an authorial inconstancy and an unstable doubleness: it destabilises the relationship between 'citing author' and 'cited author'; 'assimilating author' and 'assimilated author.' In 'De l'art de conférer', Montaigne provides something of a model for how we ought to respond to this issue:

> Le subject, selon qu'il est, peut faire trouver un homme sçavant et memorieux; mais *pour juger en luy les parties plus siennes* et plus dignes, la force et beauté de son ame, *il faut sçavoir ce qui est sien et ce qui ne l'est point*, et en ce qui n'est pas sien combien on luy doibt en consideration du chois, disposition, ornement et

[34] On the metaphor of the balance, see Gray, *La Balance de Montaigne* and, on the 'titubant' nature of Montaignean equilibrium, see John O'Brien, 'Question(s) d'équilibre', *Lire les Essais de Montaigne*, ed. by Noel Peacock and James J. Supple (Paris: Champion, 2001), pp. 107-122.

> langage qu'il y a fourny. Quoy? s'il a emprunté la matiere et empiré la forme, comme il advient souvent. Nous autres, qui avons peu de practique avec les livres, sommes en cette peine que, quand nous voyons quelque belle invention en un poëte nouveau, quelque fort argument en un prescheur, nous n'osons pourtant les en louer que nous n'ayons prins instruction de quelque sçavant si cette piece leur est propre ou si elle est estrangere; *jusques lors je me tiens tousjours sur mes gardes*. (III.8.940, my emphasis).

The impetus for this passage is Montaigne's account of his reading of Philippe de Comines in which he found a phrase which, in turn, found its antecedent in Tacitus, in Seneca, and in Quintus Cicero: Montaigne finds himself in a position not unlike ours as we read the *Essais*. This extract, and particularly the first half, reads as a standard account of *imitatio* as assimilation and appropriation: one ought to consider the use and application of the borrowed material, its 'disposition, ornement et langage', when attempting to judge how well an imitating author has made the source material his own.

Montaigne outlines a model for interpreting intertextual transfer which addresses the text in terms of literary property – 'ce qui est sien et ce qui ne l'est point' – and as an 'index' of agency, moral character, *ingenium*: the author's textual property makes legible 'les parties plus siennes', 'la force et beauté de son ame.'[35] The reading practice Montaigne describes comprises two stages of judgement: the first determines what is and is not borrowed; the second then judges how well the borrower has made this material their own, how successfully they have taken these words into the service of their own 'ame'. At both stages, a definitive and authoritative judgement is made. This is a form of reading which recognises the interaction of different authorial personae within one text before issuing a judgement which resolves any tension in this pluralism, providing an account of the textual property – *verba* and *res* – belonging to each.

[35] On literary property and the book as an 'index' of character, see the studies cited above by Kathy Eden and Warren Boutcher respectively.

There is a key shift in pronouns, however, in which Montaigne makes plain his distance from such models and practices: ‘Nous autres, qui avons peu de practique avec les livres’. We, as readers, are also ‘en cette peine’. Leading by example, Montaigne states that, when he does not know what parts of a text belong to whom, he holds himself ‘tousjours sur [ses] gardes’ or, we might say, he suspends judgement. But this is not a disinterested or tranquil suspension of judgement: he describes this as an alert, problematic, and difficult experience; one of struggle and anxiety rather than of sublimation and *ataraxia* and one which echoes the ‘peine’ felt by Montaigne in the passage from ‘De la praesumption’ studied above (‘Qui voudroit sçavoir d’où sont les vers et exemples que j’ay icy entassez, me mettroit en peine de le luy dire’, II.17.651). Montaigne’s experience of and reaction to this intertextual problem is much less stable, less resolved, and less definitive than those against whom he positions himself: he places himself in opposition to ‘sçavant[s]’ who are capable of making judgements on these matters but the antithesis he proposes is not the absence of judgement but rather a constant, engaged struggle and an inability to determine things one way or another.

What is more, this problematic, painful state is at once endless and finite, as the ‘jusques lors’ introducing the claim to suspend judgement demonstrates. It is endless if we, ‘nous’, attempt to resolve these issues of authorial ambiguity for ourselves; finite, bathetically so, if the true state of things is revealed to us by an authority. ‘Quelque sçavant’ can determine the true owner of text (‘si cette piece leur est propre’) and rightful recipient of praise (‘louer’) and yet this imagined consultation takes place in a context other than that of the reading. Montaigne’s account of agitated indecision and ignorance hinges on his and our experiences as readers, experiences both of aesthetic and critical response to the texts (‘belle invention’, ‘fort argument’) and of our ignorance (‘peine’, ‘nous n’osons pourtant les en louer’). In other words, Montaigne’s reading, unlike that of the ‘sçavant’, is loaded with

emotional and critical tension; it is engaged and unresolved and Montaigne prioritises this subjective experience of an on-going practice of reading which finds definitive resolution only when we step away from the text.

Approaching a passage such as the end of the 'Apologie', it seems that Montaigne encourages us to read as he says he reads: feeling the uncertainty, the duality and engaging in this painful form of suspending one's judgement; a suspension which is painful precisely because it is not one of equilibrium and stasis but is engaged in an endless series of weak, fragile judgements. The text in these instances seems to have 'diverses visages' (II.12.509): two authors – Montaigne and Plutarch; Philippe de Comines and Seneca or Tacitus or Quintus Cicero – seem to maintain the authorial role at the same time and yet, in reading the passage, we, like Montaigne, recognise now one, now the other. Montaigne's reflections on reading passages of doubtful authoring both in his own text and in those by others – his assertion that the role of 'author' can be lost; that our experience of these doubtful, double passages is one of on-going, painful struggle – direct us ('nous') towards a mode of reading which attempts to resolve this doubleness only to find that, having determined things one way, the other authorial persona seems to pop back up. Montaigne's repeated claims to deprive his authors of their textual goods coupled with his comments on losing his own is what differentiates the essayist's 'in-between' authorship from models of authorial pluralism conceived as acts of digestion, patronage, or the application of common property. In these passages of ambiguous authorship, there is, for Montaigne and his reader, a plurality or doubleness of authoring but it is one which collapses endlessly in the act of reading into a sequence of weak and temporary judgements: without resolution, this is not the firm judgement of the 'sçavant' but is instead a reading practice in which both authoring and the reader's judgement become mobile and indefinite.

For the reader (which always includes Montaigne), this unstable dualism constitutes not only to a 'forme d'escrire douteuse' (II.12.509) but also a doubtful way of reading. As Montaigne says in 'De l'expérience', 'La parole est moitié à celuy qui parle, moitié à celuy qui l'escoute. Cettuy-cy se doibt preparer à la recevoir selon le branle qu'elle prend. Comme entre ceux qui jouent à la paume, celuy qui soustient se desmarche et s'apreste selon qu'il voit remuer celuy qui luy jette le coup et selon la forme du coup' (III.13.1088). As Hall Bjornstad notes, '[w]hat seems to trigger the appearance of the tennis players in this phrase is the word "motion".'[36] For Montaigne, words and texts are on the move and, to read and write well, we must be able to move also. Notably, this line from 'De l'experience' is lifted almost exactly from Plutarch's own discussion of how we ought to listen to and engage actively with literature: 'car il est à moitié de la parole avec celuy qui dit, & luy doit ayder […]. Mais tout ainsi comme en jouant à la paulme, il fault que celuy qui reçoit la balle se remue dextrement, au pris qu'il voit remuer celuy qui luy renvoye.'[37] Engaging in the act he describes, Montaigne responds to Plutarch's volley, redirecting 'la balle' which is now in his court.

Reading, both in and of the *Essais*, is not passive reception but neither is it appropriation or digestive transformation or any of those other standard tropes which are frequently employed when thinking about textual transfer; if it were, the text would once again become static, resolved; it would lose its vitality and productive ambiguity; it would go from being 'Plutarchan' text to 'Plutarchan' text reworked, re-authored by Montaigne and that would be the end of it. Reading in and of Montaigne's text relies on authorial instability to keep the ball in play and to defer arrest and conclusion. We enter the *Essais* seeing Montaigne in such a game of tennis, playing with Seneca or Plutarch or both of them or someone else: the text – that is, the ball – moves back and forth, taking on a particular

[36] Hall Bjornstad, 'The Metaphors of Textual Transfer: From Indigestion to Early Modern Tennis', *Borrowed Feathers*, pp. 215-228. (p. 227).
[37] 'Comment il fault ouir', *Les Œuvres morales et meslees de Plutarque*, fol. 29r.

characteristic – its 'spin' – 'selon la forme du coup', though this characteristic is not definitive. The ball is always in Montaigne's court or in Plutarch's and yet it is given meaning and movement in passing from one to the other and back again. As readers of the *Essais*, we are more than spectators: we enter the game ourselves, playing not only with Montaigne but also with his own competitors in a sort of three-, four-, five-way tennis.[38]

With authorial ambiguity, Montaigne finds a way to write doubtfully. Rather than recording a philosophical position of doubt in a text which is nevertheless assertive, resolved, and static, Montaigne moves authorship onto the page, to the space between authors, such that authoring becomes an on-going practice. His text becomes doubtful, double; it offers multiple interpretations and demands the engagement of the reader. This doubtful way of authoring reimagines the relationship between author and text as a relationship of thinking: rather than assimilating the words of others, making them express his ideas, Montaigne practises continuous and exploratory thinking with these bits of text which seem now to be his, to chime with what and how he is thinking, and now not to be his, no longer his, or someone else's. Rather than bending them to his model, it is with these in-between texts that Montaigne comes to recognise the pattern of his thinking. It is in this sense that Montaigne's book makes him as much as he it. The page, not Montaigne's 'mind' or his self, independent of the book, becomes the centre from which inconstant, unresolved thinking is done: the text between Montaigne and, for example, Plutarch alternately presents these two 'visages', resolving unsteadily and temporarily only for that authorial alignment to be supplanted by another. It is in interacting with this text that is both 'his' and 'not-his' that Montaigne finds both a tool for thinking doubtfully and a means of writing this doubtful thought. This practice of thinking, like the practice of authoring, is incomplete, unresolved, and in progress.

[38] On 'la participation du lecteur', see Margaret M. McGowan, 'L'Art du décousu et la part du lecteur dans les *Essais*', *Lire les Essais de Montaigne*, pp. 39-50.

In ‘De l’oisiveté’, Montaigne describes how he had planned to ‘faire plus grande faveur à mon esprit, […] et s’arrester et rasseoir en soy’ (I.8.33). He quickly found, however, that ‘faisant le cheval eschappé, il se donne cent fois plus d’affaire à soy mesmes […] et m’enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques’ (ibid.). He took these monstrous, double, and doubtful thoughts and began to ‘les mettre en rolle’ not for posterity nor to simply record them but ‘pour en contempler’; to think with and through them. Montaigne is the ‘consubstantiel’ author, then, not because he stands above his text, issuing its assertions monovocally, not because the text stands as a record of his thoughts or his character, but rather because he thinks in and with writing, asking ‘is this what I think? Is this how I think?’, taking up the words of others and thinking with them too, seeing text and textual assertions, as the inherent flux and vicissitude of all things requires, from a multitude of perspectives; as his and not-his.